

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                  |
|------------------|
| STATE:           |
| Pennsylvania     |
| COUNTY:          |
| Philadelphia     |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| ENTRY DATE       |

## 1. NAME

|                  |
|------------------|
| COMMON:          |
| Christ Church    |
| AND/OR HISTORIC: |
| Christ Church    |

## 2. LOCATION

|                        |      |                         |      |
|------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|
| STREET AND NUMBER:     |      |                         |      |
| 2nd and Market Streets |      |                         |      |
| CITY OR TOWN:          |      | CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: |      |
| Philadelphia           |      | 3rd                     |      |
| STATE                  | CODE | COUNTY:                 | CODE |
| Pennsylvania           | 42   | Philadelphia            | 101  |

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)   | OWNERSHIP  | STATUS  | ACCESSIBLE<br>TO THE PUBLIC  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building<br><input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both                                    | Public Acquisition:<br><input type="checkbox"/> In Process<br><input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work<br>in progress                               |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)  |  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br><input type="checkbox"/> Comments<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____ |

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

|                              |
|------------------------------|
| OWNER'S NAME:                |
| Corporation of Christ Church |
| STREET AND NUMBER:           |
| 2nd and Market Streets       |
| CITY OR TOWN:                |
| Philadelphia                 |
| STATE:                       |
| Pennsylvania                 |
| CODE                         |
| 42                           |

## 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: |
| Philadelphia City Hall              |
| STREET AND NUMBER:                  |
| Broad and Market Streets            |
| CITY OR TOWN:                       |
| Philadelphia                        |
| STATE                               |
| Pennsylvania                        |
| CODE                                |
| 42                                  |

## 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

|   |
|---|
| TITLE OF SURVEY:  |
| Historic American Buildings Survey (11 photos, 1939, 13 photos, 1958-69) (19 sheets, 1933, 11 photos, 1965-69)  |
| DATE OF SURVEY:   |
| 1933, 1939, 1965-69 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local |
| DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  |
| Library of Congress/Annex   |
| STREET AND NUMBER:  |
| Division of Prints and Photographs  |
| CITY OR TOWN:   |
| Washington  |
| STATE:  |
| D.C.  |
| CODE  |
| 11  |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

|              |
|--------------|
| STATE:       |
| Pennsylvania |
| COUNTY:      |
| Philadelphia |
| ENTRY NUMBER |
| DATE         |

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)  
☒ Excellent    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Deteriorated    ☐ Ruins    ☐ Unexposed

(Check One)  
☒ Altered    ☐ Unaltered

(Check One)  
☐ Moved    ☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The main body of Christ Church is a two-story brick structure, with the walls laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. There is an extensive use of molded bricks in window frames, pilaster bases, and water tables. Along the exterior side walls, superimposed orders of pilasters and entablatures separate the keystone round topped windows and support a wooden cornice of Roman modillions at the roof line. The heavy wooden balustrade crowning the eaves is topped by pedestal urns, originally of wood but now of cast iron filled with concrete. This balustrade serves to conceal the slope of the separate gallery roofs and to unify the exterior design.

The predominant feature of the exterior is the great Palladian window at the eastern end which lights the chancel. The center is topped by a carved keystone and medallions while the side windows are crowned by a rich Ionic entablature. Great spiral scrolls visually create a more flowing junction between the balustrade and the crowning pediments of the central section in a manner very similar to Italian Baroque churches. Blind niches flank the center motif of the Palladian window and complete the almost Italianate baroque flavor.

The 28 foot square tower at the west end has stone walls four feet thick, which are faced by brick. The great octagonal wooden spire, reminiscent of James Gibb's St. Martin-in-the-fields in London, rises to a height of 196 feet. The steeple was repaired in 1771 and rebuilt in its original form after a fire in 1908.

On the interior, three widely spaced Doric columns rise from pedestals to support individual blocks of entablature, a usual manipulation of the classical forms begun in the Renaissance. From these blocks spring the lateral arches of the nave which carry an elliptical plaster ceiling. Apparently these columns were originally engaged against the gallery fronts, but were moved in 1834 when the galleries were remodeled by Thomas U. Walter, in a belief that they would be more impressive. The chancel is set within an elliptical arched alcove which frames the Palladian window. The entablature found above the aisle columns is carried along the sides of the chancel, extending at the corners to create a broken entablature in the baroque spirit. Doors on either side of the chancel are crowned by heavy broken pediments, adding a further movement of forms identified with baroque design.

The wineglass pulpit, reading desk, and font were made in 1770, the mahogany altar table in 1788. The branched chandelier above the center aisle of the church, installed in 1744, is one of the oldest in the country which is still hanging in its original place. Although the organ has undergone several enlargements and renovations, the frontal of the organ as viewed today, is exactly as installed in 1766. The first major interior changes occurred in 1835-36, when the original high-backed pews were replaced with lower seats and the original brick floor covered with wood. The galleries were also modeled into their present form by Thomas U. Walter at this time. In 1882 the present tile floor and pews were

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian      ☐ 16th Century      ☒ 18th Century      ☐ 20th Century  
☐ 15th Century      ☐ 17th Century      ☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1727, 1754

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |  |  |

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Christ Church, Philadelphia, constructed between 1727 and 1754, is one of the finest large Georgian colonial churches in the United States and probably the most ornate and imposing of this group. Its elegance is unmatched for the early date and none can compare to the Baroque richness of forms. The extensive use of molded brick and the warmth of material in the glazed headers laid in Flemish bond is enhanced by the contrasting white trim and the massive Palladian window used at Christ Church. These features closely relate it to the Baroque phase of the English churches of Wren and Gibbs. As a reflection of the wealth and sophistication of Philadelphia citizens, it stands today along with Carpenters' Hall, Independence Hall, and the impressive residences like the Powell and Reynolds-Morris Houses as a reminder of the self-confident cosmopolitan people who inhabited them during the formative years of our history.

HISTORY

Christ Church is the third of three churches that stood on this site. The second church stood on land occupied by the eastern part of the present building. It is recorded as housing forty-two pews and was constructed in part of brick. In 1727 the vestry decided an addition of 33 feet to the west end was needed, along with a foundation for a tower and steeple. The western portion of the structure was completed in 1733 and housed the congregation while the new eastern portion was under construction. The present building was completed in 1744.

Tradition assigns the design of the building, to Dr. John Kearsley, an amateur architect. He is known to have taken an active part in superintending the actual construction of the main body of the church between 1727-1744. It was also Dr. Kearsley who paid for the wooden urns ordered from England in 1736. The tower and steeple, completed in 1754, was designed by John Harrison and built by Robert Smith and John Armstrong, carpenters, and Robert Palmer, mason. This steeple was repaired in 1771 by Robert Smith and rebuilt in 1908 after it was destroyed by fire.

The spire was topped by a royal crown until 1777 when it was conveniently destroyed by lightning. It was replaced by a golden bishop's mitre, 2 1/2 feet high, because at the time a cross was considered a sign of the Church of Rome and as such, unsuitable for an Anglican Church. Parish records show that such noted Revolutionary leaders as Benjamin Franklin, Robert

(continued)

# 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Christ Church File, Philadelphia Historical Commission, City Hall Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.  
 Cousins, Frank, and Philip M. Riley, Colonial Architecture of Philadelphia, Boston, 1920, pp. 149-150, 219-221.  
 Dickson, Harold E., A Hundred Pennsylvania Buildings, State College, Pa., 1954, p. 14.  
 Eberlein, Harold D. and Lippincott, Horace M., The Colonial Homes of Philadelphia and Its Neighborhood, Philadelphia, 1912, pp. 14, 29, 44, 102, 300.

(continued)

# 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                                     |                                      | OR | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                                      |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE<br>Degrees Minutes Seconds | LONGITUDE<br>Degrees Minutes Seconds |    | LATITUDE<br>Degrees Minutes Seconds   | LONGITUDE<br>Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW   | ° ' "                               | ° ' "                                |    | UTM 18.487450.442200  | ° ' "                                |  |
| NE   | ° ' "                               | ° ' "                                |    |   |                                      |  |
| SE   | ° ' "                               | ° ' "                                |    |   |                                      |  |
| SW   | ° ' "                               | ° ' "                                |    |   |                                      |  |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY  | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |

# 11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmarks Review Project; original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1967

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service DATE: 8/30/74

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

# 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

# NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

Landmark

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

Boundary Certified:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Chief, Hist. &  
Arch. Surveys

Boundary Affirmed:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Director, OAHPS

15/1970  
date

date

date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Pennsylvania

COUNTY

Philadelphia

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1)

Christ Church

installed. In a survey of the nineteenth century it is noted that mahogany railings and balusters around the chancel were replaced with walnut. It is also noted at this time that the canopy atop the pulpit was removed. Stained glass dates from the second half of the 19th century and as late as 1966 could still be found in the Palladian window. This has now been replaced by clear glass which would have been used originally. The most recent restoration in 1964 and 1968 made no change in the appearance of the church but was necessary to insure its preservation. The century old copper roof was replaced and steel girders were installed above the ceiling to reinforce the original wood rafter.

BOUNDARY

The boundary is drawn to include only the main church building, beginning at the northeast corner at the west curb of the intersection of Filbert and Second Street, then continuing south on Second to the north curb of the intersection of Second and Church Street, then west on Church Street to the point where it is intersected by American Street between the walled churchyard and the rectory, then north along the east curb of American Street to Filbert Street, then east along the south curb of Filbert Street to the point of beginning at Filbert and Second Streets, as indicated in red on a street map of Philadelphia.

Pennsylvania

COUNTY

Philadelphia

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS) **INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (1)

Christ Church

Morris and George Washington all worshipped at Christ Church and in July, 1775 the Continental Congress worshipped there as a body.

Still used today as an Episcopal church, Christ Church has an active parrish and a continuous history of occupation since its founding in 1695.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| STATE<br>Pennsylvania  |      |
| COUNTY<br>Philadelphia |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY       |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER           | DATE |
|                        |      |

(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical References: (1) Christ Church

Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952, pp. 537-38.  
Shoemaker, Robert W., "Christ Church, St. Peter's, and St. Paul's," Historic Philadelphia, Philadelphia, 1953, pp. 187-98.  
Tatum, George B., Penn's Great Town, Philadelphia, 1961, pp. 27-30, 35-36.  
The Story of Christ Church in Philadelphia, Philadelphia, 1969.  
Wallace, Philip B., and Dunn, William, Colonial Churches and Meeting-Houses of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, New York, 1931, plates 1-30.

